

Mandatory participation once the parties agree to mediate

Although the Settlement Conference and Mediation Program is voluntary, once the parties agree to participate, it becomes **MANDATORY** that they comply with the procedures set forth in the court's scheduling letter or risk the imposition of sanctions. In particular, all parties and their counsel must attend all mediation sessions in person. If a party is not an individual, then a party representative with full authority to settle all appeals and cross-appeals must attend in person. In cases where insurance coverage may apply, a representative of each carrier with full settlement authority must attend in person.

Intake procedures and timing of the mediation process

The mediation process commences as soon as possible after the filing of the *Notice of Appeal*, to save the parties as much money and time as possible in record and brief preparation. If the parties have indicated their agreement to mediate on the Mandatory Docketing Statement (MDS), or otherwise choose to participate in the Settlement Conference and Mediation Program, the Settlement and Mediation Coordinator (the court's administrator in charge of administering the Settlement Conference and Mediation Program, including scheduling mediations) will promptly notify counsel of the date and time of the mediation, the appointment of a mediator and the court's requirements for participation, including providing the mediator with information and assuring that the appropriate individuals appear at the mediation.

Effect of mediation on the timing of the appellate process

Participation in the Settlement Conference and Mediation Program does not affect the court schedule for preparation of the record or for briefing. Any requests for continuances or stays must be addressed to the court under the local rules. Neither the Settlement and Mediation Coordinator nor the mediator may approve any continuance.

Additional ways to participate in the Settlement Conference and Mediation Program

If the parties do not indicate in the MDS their agreement to participate in the Settlement Conference and Mediation Program, they may do so at a later time in the following ways:

By agreement: If at any point in the appeal process the parties decide to participate in the Settlement Conference and Mediation Program, counsel may contact the Settlement and Mediation Coordinator to schedule mediation.

By confidential request: If a party would like to participate in the Program, but is reluctant to contact the other side, counsel may contact the Settlement and Mediation Coordinator confidentially to discuss the case and request that she contact the other counsel to discuss the possibility of participating in the Program.

By invitation of the court: The Settlement and Mediation Coordinator may contact counsel to invite parties to participate in the Settlement Conference and Mediation Program. Participation in the Program is entirely voluntary and any contact initiated by the Settlement and Mediation Coordinator is intended merely to inform counsel about the program and to offer assistance in settlement.

Mediation

Mediation is an informal, **confidential** process in which a neutral party (the mediator) assists the parties to understand their own interests, the interests of the other parties, and the practical and legal realities they all face. The mediator helps the parties explore options and arrive at a mutually acceptable resolution of the dispute. The mediator does not resolve the dispute. The parties do.

The mediators

The court has recruited to its panel experienced mediators and appellate specialists, based on their training, experience and performance. In addition, the court provides its mediators with intensive training in appellate mediation. The Settlement and Mediation Coordinator matches mediators to specific disputes.

Mediator compensation

Mediators volunteer a total of six hours of time for the mediation, which normally includes: (a) two hours of preparation time to conduct pre-mediation conferences and to read and analyze materials provided by counsel in advance of the mediation and (b) four hours of time in mediation sessions.

After a total of six hours of preparation and/or mediation, mediators are permitted to charge the parties for additional mediation services rendered, at their hourly rate, provided all parties agree.